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Biden seeks funding to help prosecutors focus on taking criminals off Delaware's streets

'These are critical resources we need to protect families and communities'

Dover – Attorney General Beau Biden asked the General Assembly's Joint Finance Committee today to approve the funding the Department of Justice needs. Biden's top request presented today for the Department of Justice's fiscal 2012 operating budget was funding to replace expiring federal grants that support nine key positions.

"These are critical resources we need to protect Delaware's families and communities," said Biden, whose agency annually handles about 69,000 felony and misdemeanor cases. "Our prosecutors want to spend as much time of their time as possible in the courtroom ensuring criminals pay for their crimes, and that is what the resources we are seeking will allow them to do."

The grant-funded positions Biden asked legislators to help his agency keep are:

- Three prosecutors (one per county) specializing in sex crimes and child abuse cases (\$316,400). Together, these positions handle approximately 237 new cases per year, most of which involve crimes committed against children.
- Two criminal investigators and an administrative assistant (\$180,300). The work of the criminal investigators has cut case dismissals in New Castle County Superior Court by two thirds over two years.
- A misdemeanor crimes prosecutor and three administrative staff in the department's Criminal Division (\$244,800).

"Our child abuse and sex crimes prosecutors target the worst of society," Biden said.

"Delaware is recognized as a leader in protecting children, but children are especially vulnerable and we must be vigilant in responding to crimes against them."

Biden also sought additional funding for a forensic accountant to respond to the growth of complex financial crimes, and matching funds to hire an additional Medicaid fraud prosecutor.

As he outlined the Department of Justice's funding requests, Biden highlighted the agency's significant work over the past year since he last briefed JFC members, including:

- expanding the Child Predator Task Force's use of undercover online investigations to stop predators before they can victimize kids;
- educating thousands of Delaware schoolchildren about how to stay safe online and the dangers of bullying and sexting;
- helping to protect Delaware's precious natural resources by collecting \$2.15 million in penalties assessed against those illegally polluting our environment in fiscal 2010, double the amount collected in fiscal 2009;

- recovering \$4.6 million of taxpayers' money from environmental litigation, Medicaid fraud investigations, and vendors who submitted false claims to state agencies;
- securing over \$1 million fines and settlements from consumer and investor fraud investigations; and
- giving homeowners an opportunity to avoid foreclosure by connecting them with their lenders and housing counselors during Mortgage Fraud Task Force workshops.

“The men and women who work in the Department of Justice are dedicated to standing up for the most vulnerable among us and protecting taxpayers from fraud and abuse,” Biden said. “We will always be looking for new ways to fight crime and keep Delawareans safe.”

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